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E.O. 12958: DECL: 8/10/2016

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SUBJECT: HOLY SEE VIEWS ON CUBA TRANSITION

REF: Sandrolini-Larrea emails

CLASSIFIED BY: Christopher Sandrolini, Charge d'affaires a.i.,
EXEC, State.

REASON: 1.4 (d)

[¶1.](#) (C) Summary. Charge d'affaires discussed Cuba with Holy See Acting FM on August 10, pressing USG views. The Holy See does not plan to make any public statements at this time. Post nevertheless encourages Department contact with senior Holy See officials on this issue. End summary.

[¶2.](#) (C) During an August 10 meeting with Charge d'affaires on Lebanon, Holy See Acting FM Parolin noted points on Cuba which Charge had delivered earlier in the week. Charge took the opportunity once again to press USG view that Cuba should release political prisoners, restore fundamental freedoms, and commit to free and fair multiparty elections. Charge noted that USG is asking other countries to support these goals publicly and asked whether the Holy See could make a public statement as well.

[¶3.](#) (C) Parolin appreciated the reassurances provided by the USG (e.g. that Cubans would lead the way to any change, that the USG is committed to safe and orderly migration, etc.) but said the Holy See would certainly not make any statement now. He reminded charge that Havana-based Cardinal Ortega and the Cuban bishops conference had spoken already (praying for Fidel's health and opposing any foreign intervention) and it would not be appropriate for Rome to say anything more at this time.

Comment

[¶4.](#) (C) Parolin's comment reflects several considerations. The Holy See is always wary of stepping on the toes of national bishops' conferences in matters concerning that country; apart from that, it is naturally cautious in all public political matters. The Holy See may also consider it unseemly to speak about "transition" as if it were anticipating Castro's death. Post understands that Department may be considering a high-level contact with a Vatican senior official on this issue; we would encourage such contact. There is little likelihood that the Holy See would change its mind about a public statement, but we might be able to influence what the Holy See says privately to the bishops conference about its own public statements.

SANDROLINI